UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FIFTY-FIRST SESSION

Official Records

THIRD COMMITTEE
57th meeting
held on
Friday, 29 Novemer 1996
at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 57th MEETING

Chairman: Mrs. ESPINOSA (Mexico)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 110: HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS (continued)

(c) HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATIONS AND REPORTS OF SPECIAL RAPPORTEURS AND REPRESENTATIVES (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (continued)

CLOSURE OF THE SESSION

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Distr. GENERAL
A/C.3/51/SR.57
25 August 1997
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: FRENCH

96-82418 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 110: HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS (continued)

(c) HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATIONS AND REPORTS OF SPECIAL RAPPORTEURS AND REPRESENTATIVES (continued) (A/51/459 and A/51/507)

1. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Committee should take note of the note by the Secretary-General transmitting the interim report of the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Burundi (A/51/459) and the note by the Secretary-General on the situation of human rights in southern Lebanon and the western Bekaa (A/51/507), neither of which had been altered in any way.

2. It was so decided.

3. The CHAIRMAN declared that consideration of agenda item 110 (c) was closed.

AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (continued)

Organization of work of the Third Committee and draft biennial programme of work of the Committee for 1997-1998 (A/C.3/51/L.72)

4. Mr. BUNCH (Division for Policy Coordination and ECOSOC Affairs) said that the Secretariat, in preparing document L.72, had taken into account the resolutions which the Committee had just adopted.

5. Ms. ARGUETA (El Salvador), supported by Mr. BARRETO (Peru), Ms. LIMJUCO (Philippines), Ms. CASTRO DE BARISH (Costa Rica) and Ms. BENNANI (Morocco), said that she had reservations about the place to which the culture of peace had been assigned in the Committee's draft biennial programme of work. In document L.72, that topic appeared under item 12 (b), entitled "Human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms". However, paragraph 7 of resolution L.60, which had been adopted by the Third Committee, did not rule out the possibility of considering the question as a separate agenda item at the fifty-second session, and that possibility should be retained. During the discussion of the topic in question, numerous delegations had asked that the culture of peace should be considered separately.

6. Mr. BUNCH (Division for Policy Coordination and ECOSOC Affairs) said that the only reason why the question had been included under item 12 (b) in document L.72 was that resolution L.60, entitled "Culture of peace", had been submitted under agenda item 100 (b), namely "Human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms". However, it would be for the officers of the Committee to determine under which agenda item the question should be considered at the fifty-second session.

7. Mr. BIGGAR (Ireland) recalled that his country had been one of the sponsors of resolution L.60. The text of paragraph 7 of that resolution had been drafted with particular care in order to ensure that the question of the placement of

the item in the agenda was left open. It was not for the Third Committee to decide then and there under which agenda item the question should be considered. The same applied to item 6 in document L.72, entitled "Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women". Perhaps that question could be considered under item 5, "Advancement of women". There again, however, it would be for the Committee's officers to decide.

8. Ms. TAMLYN (United States of America) and Mr. AQUARONE (Netherlands) expressed support for the position taken by Ireland.

9. The CHAIRMAN said that the best way to settle the matter would be to state clearly in the Third Committee's report to the General Assembly that there had been some differences of opinion within the Committee concerning where the question of the culture of peace should appear on the agenda for the next session, inasmuch as it would be the Committee's officers who would make the final decision.

10. Ms. DE WET (Namibia) noted that on page 10 of document L.72, in the middle of the page, the title of an item was incomplete. The wording should be "United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education and public information activities in the field of human rights," as in the title of resolution L.70 dealing with that subject.

11. Mr. AQUARONE (Netherlands) drew the Committee's attention to paragraph 2 of document L.72, which referred to documentation. He suggested that the final sentence of that paragraph should be reworded in such a way as to emphasize the need to ensure that documents were distributed within the time limits set forth in the rules of procedure, i.e. several weeks in advance. In practice it frequently happened that documentation was made available to delegations no more than five or six minutes before a meeting was due to begin. He was well aware, of course, that the Secretariat was finding it difficult to perform its task within the regulation time limits owing to the limited resources at its disposal. The fact remained that it was extremely difficult to work effectively under such conditions.

12. Referring to item 12 (a) of the document, he noted that two of the questions there listed for consideration on a biennial basis were the Report of the Committee against Torture and the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture. He recalled that, in the resolution adopted by the Third Committee at the current session, those two matters had been grouped together under a single heading, namely "Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment". Accordingly, perhaps they should be consolidated in the draft biennial programme of work as well.

13. Referring to page 5 of document L.72, where there was a passage dealing with the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, an issue that was to be taken up every other year, he wondered whether the same heading might not be expanded to encompass the issue of policies and programmes involving youth which the General Assembly had decided at its forty-ninth session (resolution 49/154) to consider at its fifty-second session.

14. Mr. BUNCH (Division for Policy Coordination and ECOSOC Affairs) said that there was, in fact, no reason why that issue could not be included in the biennial programme of work under questions relating to social matters. With respect to the several questions as they appeared in document L.72, he explained that, once the Committee had approved its draft biennial programme of work, the Secretariat would review the document and ensure that questions which currently appeared separately were consolidated in all cases where the relevant resolution grouped them together under a single heading.

15. The CHAIRMAN stated that she fully shared the concern expressed by the representative of the Netherlands in the matter of documentation. In particular, it was of the utmost importance for special rapporteurs and representatives who had been asked to prepare reports to take all necessary measures to ensure that their reports were ready in good time. The question should be taken up with the Commission on Human Rights.

16. Ms. ZHANG (China), referring to the remark of the representative of Ireland about item 6 of document L.72, namely "Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women", remarked that the Third Committee had adopted a resolution that referred expressly to the question as an item for separate consideration during the fifty-second session of the General Assembly. As a decision had been reached, the question should not be reopened.

17. Mr. BIGGAR (Ireland), responding to the Chinese delegation, said that it was not his intent to alter the programme of work relating to women. He had meant to say only that it would be for the officers of the Committee to determine where the question should appear on the agenda of the next Assembly session.

18. Mr. LANGMAN (Australia), referring to page 8 of document L.72, said that item 9 made reference to two matters, whereas the Third Committee had adopted a resolution dealing with only one, namely, the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People. The reference to the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Populations should be removed. The documentation to be presented under item 9, on page 15, should include the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Programme of Activities of the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People. That report (A/51/499) had been very useful for delegations, and should be followed up with another report on the subject at the next session of the General Assembly.

19. Mr. BUNCH (Programme and Documentation Planning Section) said that Australia's proposal for the inclusion of the report in the Committee's biennial programme of work seemed very logical. It had not been mentioned in document L.72 because the relevant resolution had made no recommendation in that regard.

20. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the reference to the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Populations on page 8 of document L.72, under item 9, should be removed. If there were no objections, she would take it that the Third Committee agreed.

21. It was so decided.

22. Mr. ROSNES (Norway), speaking in reference to items 5 and 6 of document L.72, entitled "Advancement of Women" and "Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women" respectively, proposed that all documentation concerning women should refer to those two matters together.

23. Ms. LIMJUCO (Philippines) said that her delegation did not concur with the opinion of the Norwegian representative. It was premature to combine the two matters. Members of the Committee all knew that resolutions of a general nature were difficult to negotiate.

24. Mr. ROSNES (Norway) said that he had not meant that the two matters should be combined, but was simply seeking to make it easier for delegations to refer to them.

25. Mr. BIGGAR (Ireland) supported the Norwegian representative's proposal.

26. Ms. CHIGAGA (Zambia), supported by Ms. CASTRO DE BARISH (Costa Rica), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and by Mr. AGGREY (Ghana), associated herself with the position taken by the representative of the Philippines.

27. Mr. ROSNES (Norway) withdrew his proposal.

28. Ms. MESDOUA (Algeria), turning to paragraph 2 of document L.72, noted that delegations speaking on behalf of a group of countries were allowed more time for their statements. The same privilege should be extended to delegations speaking on two agenda items.

29. Mr. AQUARONE (Netherlands) said that his delegation was under the impression that the rule governing time limits of statements had also been applied to experts, rapporteurs and special representatives. That ought not to be the case. Delegations should benefit fully from all the information that rapporteurs were able to offer them.

30. The CHAIRMAN said that she was well aware of the problems that time limits could cause. However, in most cases, the seven minute rule for delegations had not been applied to special rapporteurs. In any event, that matter could be addressed at the fifty-second session.

31. Mr. OTUYELU (Nigeria) said that the seven minute rule had generally been observed and, as a result, discussions had been conducted in a disciplined manner. That was something to be pleased about.

32. Ms. WAHBI (Sudan) said that the time limits should not be applied to statements made in Arabic, because the interpretation took more time. The same should hold true for all statements made in languages other than English.

33. Mr. REZVANI (Islamic Republic of Iran) expressed his dissatisfaction with the documentation. His delegation had just learned that an addendum to a report submitted under item 110 (c) of the agenda would not be available until the following week, while the resolution concerning the subject to which that addendum related had already been adopted. He hoped that the Committee would

not find itself in a similar situation at the next session of the General Assembly.

34. Mr. DESAGNEAUX (France) said that not only must documentation be on time, but it should also be readily available in all the official languages.

35. Mr. AGGREY (Ghana) suggested revising paragraph 2 of document L.72 by dividing it into two parts. The first part would be devoted to time limits for statements, and the second to documentation. The time limit for statements by delegations speaking on behalf of a group of countries should be 15 minutes. As the representative of Algeria had suggested, delegations making statements on two agenda items could be given a time limit of, for example, 10 minutes. Finally, delegations speaking on a single item would be limited to seven minutes. The paragraph concerning documentation should reflect the concerns expressed by delegations on that matter.

36. The CHAIRMAN said that the Secretariat would see to it that document A/C.3/51/L.72 was amended in accordance with the suggestions that had just been made. She suggested that the Committee should adopt the biennial programme of work with the changes that had been introduced during the discussion.

37. The draft biennial programme of work of the Committee for 1997-1998, as outlined in document A/C.3/51/L.72, and as orally amended, was adopted.

38. The CHAIRMAN recommended that the Committee should take note of the report of the Economic and Social Council contained in documents A/51/3 (Part I) and (Part II), particularly chapters I to IV, V (sections A and E) and VII, which had been submitted to the Fifth Committee.

39. It was so decided.

40. The CHAIRMAN declared that the Committee had concluded its consideration of item 12.

CLOSURE OF THE SESSION

41. There was an exchange of countries in which Mr. VAUGHN-FENN (United Kingdom), Mr. BIGGAR (Ireland), on behalf of the European Union, Mr. BORDA (Colombia), on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, Ms. GORDON (Jamaica), on behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean States, Mr. NAJEM (Lebanon), on behalf of the Asian States, MR. LANGMAN (Australia), on behalf of the West European and other States, Mr. ADAWA (Kenya), Ms. CASTRO DE BARISH (Costa Rica), on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, Mr. RAMISCHVILI (Russian Federation), Mr. KRLIU (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), on behalf of the East European States, Ms. ENGELBRECHT (South Africa), on behalf of the South African Development Community (SADC), Mr. MATALA DE MAZZA (Congo), on behalf of the African States, Mr. KUEHL (United States of America) and Mr. SY (Senegal) participated.

42. The CHAIRMAN, after thanking delegations for their cooperation and expressing her appreciation to the Secretary and Secretariat staff, declared that the Committee had completed its work for the fifty-first session.

The meeting rose at 5.00 p.m.